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THIS IS UNEVALUATED INFORMATION

SOURCE

Ch'ang-chiang Jih-pao.

REVEALS EXPLOITATION OF LABORERS ON LAI-CHEN RR

(Newspaper editor's comment: The fleecing of laborers by rapacious foremen and heartless contractors is a hangever of one form of powerful and cruel feudalistic oppression. The laborers should be encouraged and aided to make a democratic struggle for reform of these abuses, and the local people's government should give them direction and assistance.)

The construction of the Lai-pin--Chen-nan-kuan section of the Hunan-Kwangsi Railway by the Heng-yang Railway Bureau is such an immense undertaking that subcontracts are let to construction companies. These construction bosses and foremen use old feudalistic methods of exploiting and cruelly treating the laborers.

The engineers let contracts for the work to contracting companies; these companies take 15 percent of the funds for administrative expenses; foremen take 10 percent for their remuneration. Then 20 percent of the balance is held back to pay for the cost of damage to tools, and for the purchase of explosives, fuses, steel drills, etc. Thus, the laborers get only 60 percent of the funds which they ought to receive. Furthermore, it is a common practice for the foremen to delay paying wages to the workers.

Among such foremen is a man by the name of Li Kuang-han, of the Yeh-hsing Construction Company, who fleeces his workers cruelly. Last New Year's eve, one laborer starved to death. On 18 May 1951, this same Li Kuang-han very cruelly stopped payment of wages, forcing the workers to pawn the rags on their backs for food, which consisted of a very little rice mixed with some tea leaves and roots boiled together into a porridge.

On 26 and 27 May 1951, because they could not borrow any grain, they had nothing at all to eat. Even under ordinary conditions there were numerous cases of sickness every day and medical care was poor. When hunger was added, the conditions could not be endured. Nieh Mei-yung, age 25, of Heng-yang, and Chu Ch'ing-shun, age 19, also of Heng-yang, starved to death. Thirty other laborers were so emaciated that their bones were like sticks and they were unable to rise from their beds.

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Following the death of the two men, the Labor Union sent cadres to organize the workers, who then made demands upon Li Kuang-han, as a result of which he agreed to give one million yuan of comfort money to the families of each of the deceased.

In addition to urging the local people's government to investigate these cases of heartless exploitation, it is hoped that the Heng-yang Railway Bureau will reconsider the terms of its contracts with the construction companies and amend them to afford the workers better protection against maltreatment and fleecing. -- Wang Ch'ang-han, Laborers' Protection Section, Heng-yang District Party Committee.

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